

## Aspen Journalism programs, policies and procedures

As of Sept. 4, 2019

### Programs

#### *Mission statement in bylaws:*

The mission of Aspen Journalism is to operate exclusively as a non-profit, tax-exempt journalism organization dedicated to producing investigative journalism in the public interest for the region surrounding Aspen, the county seat of Pitkin County, Colorado, USA.

#### *Mission statement (in bold) and description on website:*

Aspen Journalism is a local, nonprofit, and investigative journalism organization in Aspen, Colorado.

**Our mission is to produce investigative journalism for the benefit of people with a stake in the Aspen region, as well-informed citizens make better decisions.**

Our area of interest radiates outward from Aspen to include Pitkin County, the Roaring Fork River watershed, the Western Slope, the state of Colorado, and the Colorado River basin.

We take a shoe-leather approach to investigative reporting, with an emphasis on defining a beat and staying on it, so we can develop insights and have an impact. We place a high value on attending public meetings, sharing public documents and talking to public officials. And we seek to hold public institutions accountable by comparing their actions to applicable standards, policies and laws.

While we are an independent news organization, we also work in collaboration with other news organizations, which helps us reach more citizens. After we publish our stories on the Aspen Journalism website, other news organizations are invited to publish them, without charge, under our Creative Commons guidelines.

Founded in 2011, Aspen Journalism is a member of the Colorado Press Association and the Institute for Nonprofit News.

Aspen Journalism is supported by [people](#) who appreciate the value of good local journalism and a free press.

We're proud to be a [NewsMatch](#) participant in 2019, for the third year in a row. NewsMatch is a national campaign that encourages grassroots support for nonprofit news organizations, and it does so by matching local donations between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31.

## **Policies**

*On journalism ethics and standards:*

We take journalistic guidance from the Society of Professional Journalists' [code of ethics](#), the Associated Press' [standards and practices](#), and *The New York Times*' standards and ethics [guidelines](#). We are a member of the [Institute for Nonprofit News](#) and the [Colorado Press Association](#).

*On journalistic independence from financial supporters:*

We subscribe to standards of editorial independence adopted by the [Institute for Nonprofit News](#).

Aspen Journalism is an independent news organization and retains full authority over its editorial content.

We are aware of the pitfalls that can arise when a news organization accepts any form of revenue, either in the nonprofit model in the form of donations, or in the commercial model in the form of advertising. As such, we diligently maintain a firewall between revenue and the newsroom.

Our news judgments are made independently and are not based on or influenced by donors.

Our organization accepts donations to support the coverage of particular beats, or broad coverage areas, but our organization maintains editorial control of all of the resulting coverage.

We cede no right of review or influence of any of our editorial content.

We do not accept anonymous donations.

We disclose donations on our [About & Contact](#) page, and we list donations by name, date, and amount as soon as they come in.

When we deem it necessary and appropriate we disclose our donors, and our key stakeholders, in our stories or in an editor's note.

Acceptance of financial support does not constitute implied or actual endorsement of donors or their products, services, actions, or opinions.

We recognize, and appreciate, that our nonprofit model relies on donations, and that all of our donors expect us to retain our independent editorial judgement and scrupulous adherence to journalist standards. So we do.

*On collaboration with other news organizations:*

Our approach to producing journalism is collaborative. We work directly with other journalists when reporting our stories, without written agreements. We do not charge anything for our work, but we do highly value the editorial services our collaborative news partners provide. They work with us to develop, edit and publish our reporting, mainly on their website and newspapers, but also on their television and radio stations.

We then publish the resulting stories on the Aspen Journalism website, often in expanded form with links to source documents and additional photos, graphs and maps. And once it is on our website, anyone else can publish the work, without charge (see guidelines below). It is an efficient and effective way to get reporting done and produce good stories. And at the core of the collaborations is trust between an editor and a reporter.

*On the use of Aspen Journalism's content:*

Aspen Journalism's work is available under a [Creative Commons License](#) and our guidelines.

You can republish our articles and graphics for free (without any cost to you), but:

You can't edit our material, except to reflect relative changes in time, location, and editorial style;

if you're republishing online, you have to link to us and include all of the links in the story;

you can't sell our material separately;

it's fine to put our stories on pages with ads, but not ads specifically sold against our stories;

you can't republish our material wholesale, or automatically; you need to select stories to be republished individually;

you have to credit us – ideally in the byline. We prefer “Author Name, Aspen Journalism,” with a link to our homepage or the article; and

you have to tag our work with an editor's note, as in, "Aspen Journalism is an independent nonprofit news organization. See [www.aspenjournalism.org](http://www.aspenjournalism.org) for more." And please include a link to our site.

## **Procedures**

Aspen Journalism's procedures, or governing practices, are based on our bylaws, which are reviewed annually by our board of directors.

### *Board meeting dates and location:*

The second Tuesday of February, March, July, August, November and December from 3 to 5 p.m. in the conference room at the Benedict Building, 1280 Ute Avenue, Suite 4, Aspen, CO.

### *Annual meeting date:*

Second Tuesday of December.

### *Election of officers:*

Officers elected at each annual meeting, by a majority vote, to terms of one year

There are currently two officers elected:

One office combines the duties of president, chair of the board, and secretary.

The second office is treasurer.

The executive director assists the board members in the duties of secretary and treasury, including taking and producing of minutes, preparing meeting agendas and packets, and preparing regular financial statements, and IRS Form 990.

### *Honorary directors on the board:*

The bylaws allow for honorary board members. They are welcome to attend board meetings but cannot vote.

Members of the Aspen Journalism Publisher's Circle are considered honorary directors.

### *Consensus voting:*

The board of directors have agreed to vote by consensus, which means that all directors present at which there is a quorum must agree upon the action to be

taken. If consensus cannot be reached, the action must be postponed until the next meeting. Meetings can be called at any time by a majority vote and proper notice.

*Notice of meetings:*

Notice of meetings requires at least 24 hours.

*Meeting materials schedule:*

Agendas and packet materials will be distributed to board members on the Tuesday before the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

*Meeting materials, content:*

The executive director will prepare for each board meeting an agenda, minutes from the last meeting, financial reports, including a YTD revenue and expenses report compared to an approved annual budget, and a profit and loss report.

The secretary will review the meeting materials and the treasurer will review the financial reports prior to their distribution to the board members.

*On committees:*

The board may designate committees. See bylaws for details.

*On nominating new board members:*

The bylaws state that “ Any vacancy occurring in the Board of Directors may be filled by the majority vote of the remaining directors. A director elected to fill a vacancy shall be elected for the unexpired term of his or her predecessor. (Note, current bylaws do not establish the length of term for board members.”

*Duties of executive director:*

The executive director serves at the pleasure of the board.

Per the bylaws, the ED "shall design, fund and implement ... the policies, programs, and procedures of Aspen Journalism, established and approved from time to time by the board of directors."

The executive director is also responsible for presenting a draft next-year budget to the board at the November meeting.

*Executive director spending limit:*

The executive director needs permission from the board chair to spend more than \$3,000.

*Approval of policies, programs and procedures:*

The board shall review and approve the organization's policies, programs and procedures at its annual meeting.

*Board member conflicts of interest:*

Board member must disclose conflicts of interest in meetings, and must sign annual statements regarding the conflict of interest policy. See bylaws for additional details.

*Retention of records:*

The secretary, through the executive director, is responsible for retention of records as specified in the bylaws.